

ADVANCES IN ENVIRONMENTAL REMOTE SENSING edited by F. M. Danson, and S. E. Plummer, John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, 1995. No. of pages: xiii + 184. Price: £55.00 (hb). ISBN 0-471-95464-0.

This book reviews recent advances in the rapidly developing field of environmental remote sensing. All but two of the chapters are based on presentations made at a session of the Institute of British Geographers' annual conference held in Nottingham early in 1994. An aim of the session and of the resulting book was to take stock of the current status of the field. This is particularly timely given the imminent launch of a series of new sensors, such as those making up the Earth Observing System, which may open a new era in Earth observation.

As with most edited books the standard varies between chapters. However, unlike many books arising from conference sessions the content is focused, here on the remote sensing of the land surface. As such, it should be of interest to readers of this journal, although the content is biased strongly towards the study of terrestrial vegetation, with only one chapter, that by Millington and colleagues, on a geomorphological topic. Nonetheless, there is much interesting material provided. With emphasis on developments from the early 1970s in diverse fields including field spectroscopy, crop monitoring, water quality and

vegetation canopy properties using both active and passive remote sensing systems, the reader is presented with much valuable information indicating the current status of remote sensing in a broad range of application areas. The book is easy to read, a credit to both the authors and editors, and well presented. It is not, however, without its problems. These range from a few minor errors to gaps in the material covered and an overly strong U.K. orientation. It is, for instance, odd that the land cover map of Great Britain, or an extract, is not included with the appropriate chapter, and the overall focus of the book on the land is rather narrow given the major developments made in the remote sensing of the atmosphere and hydrosphere, for example, which are excluded. There is also little discussion of the growing division in remote sensing between very local scale studies, based on fine spatial resolution data sets, and regional/global scale studies. Despite these comments, it must be noted that the book does achieve its stated aim of providing a useful review of developments in the remote sensing of the land. Overall, therefore, this is an interesting book that makes a valuable contribution to the subject and will be of interest to many. It provides a valuable marker of the current status of environmental remote sensing.

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THE GLOBAL CASINO: AN INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES by Nick Middleton, Edward Arnold, London, 1995. No. of pages: x + 332. Price: £40.00 (£15.99 paperback). ISBN 0-340-63210-0 (0-340-59493-4 paperback).

Whither lie the boundaries of 'environmental geomorphology'? Anyone who has carried out research or teaching which falls under this heading will have found that an initially sharp focus has a way of broadening and growing fuzzy, like ink lines on blotting paper, as human interactions with geomorphological processes are explored.

This text, while not overtly aimed at geomorphologists, is however written by a geomorphologist, and is relevant to all with an interest in past, present and possible future interactions between man and the landscape. Its scope can be compared to that of Andrew Goudie's *The Human Impact on the Natural Environment*. While both authors consider such landscape modifiers as soil erosion, desertification, deforestation, and climate change, the earlier book (now all of 14 years old) places relatively little emphasis on underlying socioeconomic causes. Middleton's book, though, has no such reticence and strays into territory more commonly occupied by human geographers: the roles of transport, waste management, energy production, mining and war are specifically considered as generators of processes which shape the environment. This is both interesting and disconcerting: just what is indisputably outside the remit of the poor, would-be environmental geomorphologist?

With such a broad scope, the book (so named because of 'parallels between the issues discussed . . . and the workings of a gambling joint'!) nimbly treads the tightrope between

excess overlap and superficiality. Two introductory chapters emphasize interconnections, while 18 further chapters each deal with a key topic. The trend of these is generally from more physically to more societally oriented issues, although each chapter emphasizes relevant policy considerations. Rather unusually (and gratifyingly) for a recent book with 'environment' in its title, the book also points out successes as well as causes for concern.

Individual ESPL readers will certainly have greater in-depth knowledge of the more physical aspects of the issues covered. Few, though, are likely to have as wide a perspective of the ways in which their pet processes interlock with the concerns of politicians. Desertification (as might be expected from this author) is especially well covered in this respect. Additionally, discussion of the policy considerations driving the land uses which result in soil erosion is particularly welcome, and is a useful update to earlier publications from Blaikie (1985) and Hallsworth (1987).

Comprehensive, informative, with excellent illustrations and right up-to-date: this is a book from which most of us (and our students) can learn.

REFERENCES

- Blaikie, P. 1985. *The Political Economy of Soil Erosion*, Longman, London.
Hallsworth, E. G. 1987. *Anatomy, Physiology and Psychology of Soil Erosion*, Wiley, Chichester.

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